A History

of

Christ Lutheran Church

OF

BALTIMORE

FOUNDED DECEMBER 18, 1887

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The original research for the history of the congregation was done by Gloria Paar, a former vice president of our congregation. Ron Thomas, our good member, updated the research and wrote and edited this historical account. Jack Robinson prepared the layout and typed this publication.

We are indebted to them for their fine work.

— John R. Sabatelli, Pastor

Christ English Lutheran Church

OF SOUTH BALTIMORE.

TRIUMPH HALL,

1240 LIGHT STREET, BET. WEST AND OSTEND STS.

A long felt need for an English Lutheran Sunday School and Church in South Baltimore has been met, and on Sunday, December 18th, 1887, services will be held in Triumph Hall, 1240 Light Street.

PREACHING—Sundays 11 A. M. and 7.30 P. M.

SUNDAY SCHOOL.—Sundays 9.30 A. M.

We extend a most cordial invitation to all to attend our Sunday School and Church services, and will be glad to have you make your church-home with us.

Fraternally,

L. M. ZIMMERMAN, PASTOR.

The first invitation

PART I

CHRIST CHURCH IS FOUNDED

As we think about the congregation and facilities of Christ Lutheran Church today and consider the beautiful sanctuary, the spacious parish building, the many-faceted services to the elderly at the Christ Church Harbor Apartments, and the community and worldwide outreach, we can only speculate about the thoughts of those attending the first services of Christ Church in South Baltimore's Triumph Hall on December 18, 1887.

We do know that events had moved very swiftly to prepare for this fateful event. Just two and a half weeks before, a young pastor named Leander M. Zimmerman, born in Manchester, Maryland, and having been ordained for only two months, had arrived in the area at the call of the Board of Home Missions of the General Synod of the Lutheran Church. The synod had established the Lutheran Church Extension Society of Baltimore City to plan strategic locations for new congregations and assist struggling parishes.

In the late nineteenth century, there were at least three German-speaking Lutheran congregations in South Baltimore. These churches had attracted the many German immigrants who had poured into this port city in the late 1800s and who had remained to live where they had debarked. For a while, the immigrants felt comfortable with the continued use of the German language in worship and of the old-world church traditions. As habits and life styles changed, however, and the immigrants and their children learned English, there was a desire for a church using the new language.

Upon his arrival, Pastor Zimmerman immediately began an extensive canvass of the neighborhood, encouraging individuals and families to become a part of the new venture. The Mission Board had rented Triumph Hall at 1240 Light Street near Ostend Street for $20.00 per month including heat and utilities, arranged for chairs to be provided free of charge by a doctor who used the hall during the week for his

practice, and allocated $100 for other necessities required for the initial work.

The first official community meeting to discuss the organization of the Sunday School was held by Pastor Zimmerman in the home of Charles G. Kriel, 5 West Henrietta Street, on December 13, 1887. A few days later, on December 18, the first session of the Sunday School and the first morning and evening services were held. It was a cold and snowy Sunday. The temperature was at zero. A local newspaper noted, "A snowstorm has made the streets of the city well-nigh impassable except for the lightest kind of sleigh."

Yet on this cold, wintry day, 96 people were present at Sunday School, 150 at the morning worship, and 115 at the evening service. Even on the first Sunday, many of the congregation had come from the adjoining counties and, what was for that time, the most remote sections of the suburbs. Because of an error by the caretaker of this old-fashioned, red brick hall, the first worship service of Christ Lutheran Church was interrupted by a troupe of Indians from a Wild West show, to whom the building had been rented for the week as a shelter. Not even this incident, however, could dampen the spirit of that faithful band of Christians. Writing about the early days, Dr. Zimmerman said:

> *"Our greatest purpose is not to have an imposing church building nor the accumulation of worldly gains, but to glorify God in the salvation of souls for His kingdom. We would as a congregation, therefore, not only work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, but in God's hands be an agency for the spiritual leavening of the world so far as it lies within our power. With the Master we would go forth and make disciples of all nations, whether it be the foreigner abroad or the man in our own country just across the street or around the corner. . . ."*

During the next two months, the diligent pastor made more than 600 neighborhood visits. The result of his efforts was the formal organization of Christ English Evangelical Lutheran Church on Sunday, February 5, 1888. The congregation had a charter membership of almost 220 people, about 150 received by confirmation or renewal of faith and 70 joining from neighboring churches. Within two weeks, 35 more people had united with the congregation. The records of March 3 showed an additional gain of 30, and 75 more members joined on April 1, bringing the total membership to around 360 in just four short

months.

Clearly, Triumph Hall was becoming too small for this growing band of believers, so a search was started for a permanent place of worship. After much negotiation, the New Sailors' City Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church on Hill Street near Charles, one of the oldest Methodist houses of worship in the city, was purchased for $8,000. The history of the congregation formerly occupying the site had concluded, "We are leaving this building because there is no future here."

The members of the new congregation of Christ Church, however, saw a great future at this location. After a general renovation, including a new roof, walls, carpeting, and pulpit furniture, as well as the purchase of the building adjoining the church to house the Sunday School, the first service in the new building was conducted on August 12, 1888. The dedication service was held on November 25, 1888, and one week later, the congregation voted to make the church self-sustaining. Thus, just one year after Dr. Zimmerman's work began in the South Baltimore area, the newly-organized congregation became self-supporting, relieving the Mission Board of the need for further assistance.

During the first years of its existence, several customs and organizations started at Christ Church which would continue for many decades. The Ladies' Aid Society, organized early in 1888, held a bazaar for five days in October and realized a profit of $1,200. This money was used for the renovation of the newly-purchased building. Christmas entertainments were held, and the custom of using the Thank Offering for benevolent causes also began at this time.

At the second Christmas celebration, the pastor presented the congregation a musical six-foot Christmas tree made in Germany. Although many of the branches are now bare, the tree is still trimmed and on display at the church each Christmas season.

Early in the church's history, Wednesday evening prayer meetings were started, regular Sunday School faculty meetings were held every other week, and a catechism class was instituted. A Deaconess Society was organized with seven women set apart as parish sisters. Not only did they care for the altar and visit the sick and troubled, but they also directed a daily Christian kindergarten during the school year. This group, the forerunner of what was later called the Altar Guild, was the first Parish Deaconess Society in any Baltimore Lutheran church and

among the first in the country.

To keep the people informed about the many activities of the busy parish, a four-sided pamphlet entitled *The Pastor's Indicator* (later revised and renamed *The Christ Church Visitor* and then *Harbor Lights*) was published beginning in 1895. An early issue contained the announcement of a Sunday School excursion to Bay Ridge Beach on July 20, 1893, with the promise of free ice cream for all (a custom which would continue for more than 85 years).

Meanwhile, church attendance and giving continued to grow. "Jubilee Day" was celebrated in January, 1892, marking the church's freedom from all indebtedness. By 1894, the membership numbered 915 people. During the first six years of his ministry, Dr. Zimmerman had baptized 455 children, married 176 couples, conducted 212 funerals, and made 11,000 pastoral visits. It was said that this pastor wore out more shoe leather than any other minister in Baltimore.

With more and more people attending Christ Church, changes had to be made in the physical plant. The Infant Department's Sunday School room was enlarged, a house on Hill street was purchased for the sexton, and the exterior appearance of the church was altered. A metal cornice was hung, and the windows restyled in the Gothic design. The chancel was relocated, and more seating was acquired by extending the nave and balcony.

The first public-address system in the city was installed so that worshipers in the lecture room could hear the service even though they could not see it. In this way, it was possible for more than 2,000 members and friends to unite in a single worship service. Later improvements added trim to the exterior church walls and put a fence between the lecture room and the blacksmith shop next door. Within a few years after these improvements, Christ Church was again debt-free.

PART II

THE ZIMMERMAN YEARS

Various organizations were formed during the pastorate of Dr. Zimmerman. The Men's Bowling League was organized in 1903 and, although recently combined with the ladies' league, is still active today, making it the oldest continuous church bowling league in Baltimore. In fact, the league is older than duckpin bowling itself. It was first organized as a tenpin group, then changed to duckpins when the small pins came into use in 1906. Youth groups called the Junior and Senior Christian Endeavor Societies were formed in 1904, and organizations such as the Ladies' Guild, Men's League, Ladies' Visiting Committee, and Sunday School Visiting Committee worked on various projects and activities at the direction of the pastor.

By the congregation's twentieth anniversary in 1907, attendance on Sunday averaged 717, and there were 225 on the Sunday School roll. In an anniversary tribute to the congregation, Dr. Zimmerman spoke about the faithful attendance, noting that "rare was there an empty pew during church services, with even the Wednesday night prayer service having large gatherings." By 1925, Christ Church had grown so much that it had the largest communicant membership of any Lutheran church in Baltimore City — 2,000. "Every seat free — Everybody welcome." These words, printed on announcement cards and on the sidewalk signboard, typified the way visitors were greeted and welcomed into the Christ Church fellowship.

Many newspaper articles over the years gave glowing tribute to Christ Church. On July 17, 1915, a whole page of pictures in a Baltimore paper showed a group of 2,000 members gathered in Druid Hill Park for a Sunday School picnic. From early morning through twilight, the members consumed seven bushels of peanuts, 1,200 blocks of ice cream, and 50 pounds of candy. A 1918 *Evening Sun* article, "A Church Downtown Doing Work All Around," stated that the purpose of Christ Church was "to be as great a blessing as possible to as many

people as possible, as long as possible."

In the work of the congregation, Dr. Zimmerman had excellent help in such consecrated deaconesses as Sister Carrie Taylor, who served faithfully for 40 years beginning in 1901, and Sister Bertha Schwanewede, who worked on the church staff from 1921 to 1929. The first ministerial son of the congregation, the Rev. Arthur C. Waldkoenig, was ordained during the last few years of Dr. Zimmerman's active pastorate.

During the winter of 1925, Dr. Zimmerman, who had been in frail health for some time, finally yielded to his doctor's advice and agreed to give up the active ministry. On April 19, 1925, devoted parishioners crowded the nave, balconies, and Sunday School rooms to pay tribute to the "Daddy Pastor" (as he often referred to himself) and to hear his final sermon after 38 years as pastor.

As a church leader, Dr. Zimmerman understood the power of publicity and was far ahead of his time in the use of promotional methods, such as publishing booklets containing dates and times of services and sermon topics. He encouraged people to attend worship by sending personal cards to members or by distributing buttons, often with his own picture or that of the church on them. For example, on one card sent to a member living outside South Baltimore, he wrote, "You have such a long distance to come, but I rejoice that distance has thus far been no barrier to you."

He was a prolific writer, publishing love stories, prose works, and many booklets of verses, his best known and most quoted poem being "Roses Will Bloom Again." Although space will not permit a complete listing of his works, *Mellow Fruits of Experience*, *Prayers*, and *The Preacher's Doorknob* were among his most popular.

Dr. Zimmerman was always an example to the people of the church and the community. While making his rounds, he carried a pocketful of candy to give to neighborhood children, and often after his visits, he would be seen leaving a member's house carrying food or clothing to give to another along the way in greater need. Some have said that seeing Dr. Zimmerman in the pulpit and hearing him preach reminded one of God himself appearing on earth.

Tall, thin, with brown eyes, wavy brown hair, a heavy moustache and beard (which, he confessed, he wore to make himself look older), and

a quick, rather high-pitched voice, Dr. Zimmerman was described in a 1910 newspaper article as never at a loss for a word. "Energy is the chief impression that you gain at first glimpse of the Rev. Dr. Zimmerman. It beams out of him—out of his eyes, out of his gestures, out of his words." Commenting on his remaining a bachelor, he told the paper that, "I am a bachelor, yet married. The church is my bride, and the entire congregation of Christ Church my children."

In addition to the work in his own parish, Dr. Zimmerman was President of the Maryland Synod in 1900, President of the Board of the Lutheran Deaconess Motherhouse for many years, Vice President of the Board of Home Missions, and for more than 25 years a member of the Board of Trustees of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. In spite of several major operations, he continued to serve the church for 25 more years after his retirement, preaching every Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving. On March 10, 1952, in his 92nd year, this pastor who had served no other parish entered the Church Triumphant.

The following descriptions are typical of the esteem in which Dr. Zimmerman was held:

"Baltimore's greatest pastor for a generation."

The Lutheran, May 7, 1925

"Nobody thought of South Baltimore without thinking of the Rev. Dr. Zimmerman. He was part of the local scene. Thousands of Baltimoreans who were not members of his church were awakened to nostalgic memories at the mere mention of his name."

Baltimore Sun, March 10, 1952

"Through his kindly nature and his consideration, he extended his influence far beyond the limits of his parish. Not the least of his contributions to the community was the example he gave it of a Christian life."

Baltimore Sun, March 11, 1952

"He was very kind and soft-spoken."

"A wonderful pastor."

"He served the church and its members 100% with his time and ability which were tremendous."

". . .He was a friend to all people of every color."

"Dr. Zimmerman inspired Christian service among everyone he knew."

Members of Christ Church, 1987

The Lighted Way

Lighted Candles, God has for us,
Christ Himself the Lighted Way,
He has promised not to leave us,
Always has kind words to say.

Even when at last we travel,
Through dark shades, thick and black,
From them we will fear no evil,
Although bold be their attack.

Christ has promised to be with us,
Why should we then think of fear,
Though asleep and all be darkness,
We still have our Christ near.

We surely should not ask for more,
With such promise from above,
We should rather, even rejoice,
And thank God for wondrous love.

The glorious day is but dawning,
Glory, glory to the king,
For all through the eternity,
Praise to Him we will sing.

By L. M. Zimmerman, D.D., LL.D.
Edition 100,000 - 1949

PART III

CHRIST CHURCH, 1925-1933

When Dr. Zimmerman retired, Christ Church was faced with its first major crisis. Some felt that with his dynamic personality and leadership gone, Christ Church would decline or even die. None of these dire predictions, however, came true. On September 1, 1925, the Rev. Oscar F. Blackwelder, a native of Newberry, South Carolina, began his work as the congregation's second pastor.

It was during his era that a regular church staff was organized. Dr. Zimmerman had no assistant pastors or secretarial help except for the Rev. Albert O. Mullen, who worked with Dr. Zimmerman briefly from 1913-14. Miss Dora Lingle was, therefore, hired as the first church secretary in 1925, and regular office hours were established. An assistant pastor, the Rev. Hugh J. Rhyne, was called in 1926 to organize programs for young people and assume the responsibilities of Olga Linsenmeyer, who had been Director of Youth Work for the preceding year. Under Pastor Rhyne's leadership, a weekly children's church service was begun in the lecture room with as many as 485 young people in attendance by 1928. Church music was directed by Charles Sherman (1923-1928) and Clifton Andrews (1928-1936).

The Christ Church Luther League was organized in 1925. Attendance grew rapidly to almost 600 members, making this the largest young people's society in the United Lutheran Church. This distinction was partly due to the congregation's rather liberal interpretation of a "young people's" group. There were several divisions in the Christ Church organization, with one being "seniors" (anyone over 21). Christ Church, therefore, had Luther Leaguers well up in years!

Beginning in 1925, the Primary, Junior, and Senior Departments of the Sunday School and the Business and Professional Women's Class were created. To meet the needs of parents, infants, and shut-ins, the Cradle Roll and Home Department were also started. An additional house next to the church was purchased, and another nearby home was rented to

accommodate the Bible School's more than 1,000 pupils. Some members can still remember vividly the crowded conditions in the Sunday classes held in the small rooms of the Hill Street homes.

Holidays have always been special times at Christ Church. The Christmas Day celebration began with a 6:00 a.m. service, with many members boarding streetcars by 4:00 a.m. in order to arrive on time. Those who entered the church after 5:00 or 5:30 a.m. had to stand in the back because of a lack of seats. New Year's Eve watch night services were also held for many years. Special Holy Week services, including confirmation on Tuesday, a preparatory service on Wednesday, a service of Holy Communion on Thursday, and the traditional three-hour service on Good Friday were always highlights of the year.

During the twenties and early thirties, weekly attendance at the 11:00 a.m. worship averaged more than 1,100 with several hundred juniors, intermediates, and teens attending a children's service at the same time. To instill a feeling of unity, the doxology, benediction, and last hymn were amplified so that all participants, including the young people, could join together. To accommodate the large crowds, the United Railways Company (forerunner of the M.T.A.) sent a special streetcar to Charles and Hill Streets on Sunday mornings at 12:15 p.m., and the Church Council hired an automobile club official to take charge of parking arrangements for cars. As his fame as an eloquent preacher spread, Dr. Blackwelder was asked to broadcast the weekly "Y.M.C.A. Pulpit" and "The Lighted Window" radio programs.

Other activities begun at this time included a daily Vacation Bible School, the Ladies' Exchange (a store at the church operated by the Ladies' Society), a men's soccer team, Boy Scout Troop #60, and the Ladies' Bowling League. Another integral part of the church program was an afternoon church school on Wednesday after regular school hours for children of members and those of the surrounding community. To provide recreational as well as religious reading material, a church library was formed, staffed by eight librarians. In 1935, the library became a station of the Enoch Pratt Free Library system of Baltimore City.

The Sunday School picnic and family excursions sponsored by the Ladies' Society were annual events anticipated by church members and friends. In the late twenties, these were held at Carlin's or Druid Hill Parks and always featured baseball games, relay races, contests, and peanut scrambles. Later, Tolchester Beach became the site as the

"Louise," the 'Emma Giles," the "Bear Mountain," and the "Bay Belle" sailed down the Chesapeake Bay with more than 1,000 Christ Church people on board.

Pastor Blackwelder brought a youthful enthusiasm to Christ Church that was contagious, and it was not long into his ministry that he realized the need for a new church building if the work of the congregation was to continue at full effectiveness. There were common complaints about inadequate rest rooms, poor fire protection, the pews being too close together, a lack of seating to accommodate the congregation, and the great expense of keeping the old church plant in good repair. There was a proposal that Christ Church consolidate with Zion Lutheran Church and move into the downtown area. Many, however, resisted the idea of leaving the South Baltimore location, believing, instead, that God had put the congregation on Hill Street and wanted His work to go on in this community. In 1928, therefore, the congregation voted to start a building fund, and even though its growth was seriously handicapped by the Depression, about $70,000 was raised. These funds were later applied toward the erection of the parish house.

During Dr. Blackwelder's ministry at Christ Church, the Rev. Carroll S. Klug, the second ministerial son of the congregation, was ordained, and two additional young men entered college and seminary at Gettysburg to prepare for the ministry, Mr. Howard O. Walker and Mr. Augustus Hackmann. After the resignation of Assistant Pastor Rhyne, Mary Propst assumed the responsibilities of youth work and parish visitation for three-and-a-half years. In May of 1930, the Rev. Roy L. Sloop accepted the church's call as its assistant pastor. This man of God was to serve the congregation in this position for seven years.

PART IV

CHRIST CHURCH, 1933-1955

After eight years as pastor, Dr. Blackwelder resigned in 1933 to accept a call in Washington, D.C. In December of the same year, Dr. John L. Deaton, a native of Hickory, North Carolina, who had served parishes in Pennsylvania, was unanimously called to become the third pastor, a post he would hold for almost 27 years.

Because of crowded conditions in the Sunday School (classes were being held in the sanctuary, the lecture room, and in two houses on Hill Street), the new pastor almost immediately instituted a capital funds appeal to add to the money already collected so that a new Sunday School building could be built. The congregation responded faithfully, and the new Parish House was dedicated with special celebratory services on June 14, 1936. The addition included a hall with a seating capacity of over 700, 22 individual classrooms, and a large kitchen. The rear of the hall had an overflow which was connected to the church by folding doors, allowing full view of the chancel and adding 50% seating capacity to the church. Each department of the Sunday School had its own assembly area, and each class a private room for instruction. The Fellowship Hall was also large enough to seat the entire Church School and was perfect for entertainments and receptions.

Directly under the Fellowship Hall was what was called in the dedication program the "most beautiful children's chapel in any Lutheran church in America." The Parish House, which also included a church parlor and administrative offices, was dedicated in honor of Dr. Zimmerman, whose bas-relief with the words "Friend, Counselor, Author" is on the back wall of the foyer.

A year after its dedication, the Fellowship Hall served as the center of worship during the renovation of the old church. As a part of this redecoration, a beautiful new stone altar was installed, and the pulpit, lectern, communion rail, and choir stalls were rearranged. The organ

was rebuilt, old lighting fixtures were replaced, and the nave was redesigned. Most of the chancel equipment was paid for through memorials and special gifts from the people. Four years after the new facility was dedicated, all debts were cleared and the mortgage was burned.

Over the years, services at Christ Church regularly attracted large crowds. As a part of the fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1937, more than 5,000 people participated in several services held on Anniversary Sunday. On Easter, 1948, 2,300 members attended the 11:00 a.m. service. Many still remember how the church was filled to capacity on many Sundays, with people sitting on the floor, the rear steps of the balcony, and all the way back to and on the stage of the Fellowship Hall. A note in the bulletin asked people politely not to put their feet on the church walls while leaning against them during worship!

During Dr. Deaton's tenure, a longer period of confirmation instruction was instituted and an Altar Guild organized. The Crusaders, a group of ten laymen, began regular visits to members. The Adult Choir grew, and Junior, Intermediate, High School, and Young Adult Choirs were formed and grew under the leadership of Edith Elgar Sackett, Albert Ruppel, Thelma Viol, James Mitchell, William Chalmers, and Mary Moyer. In all, over 175 people were members of a church musical group, with a Junior Choir of about 70 participants, making it the largest in the city and receiving superior ratings in contests at the Peabody Institute . To enhance communication with the far-reaching congregation, a newsletter, *The Christ Church Visitor*, began a weekly publishing schedule in 1936.

Juanita Horton, Doris Boylan, and Alice Botthof served as either full or part-time office secretaries following the death of Miss Lingle in 1944. In November of 1948, Miss Eva Zumbrun became church secretary, a position she held faithfully for 33 years, making her one of the most knowledgeable persons concerning the life and work of the congregation.

New social and religious activities began to meet the ever-growing needs of the people. A mother's club flourished in the 1930s, and the Young Women's Missionary Society was started to study and support the evangelism enterprise of the Lutheran church around the world. In 1956, this group changed its name to the United Lutheran Church Women. Church suppers were conducted in the Fellowship Hall several times a year, with almost 2,500 people regularly served at oyster and sour beef dinners held on two nights each November. May

Festivals as well as Father-and-Son and Mother-and-Daughter Banquets became activities eagerly awaited each year by many members and friends.

Separate services were conducted for children in the chapel each Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m. with a full children's choir participating. There were also special children's services on Thanksgiving and Good Friday and other youth-oriented activities, such as Vacation Bible School scheduled for two weeks each summer. In the 1940s and 1950s, Sunday School picnics were held at Tolchester Beach, Gwynn Oak Park, Bay Shore Park, Beverly Beach, Mago Vista Beach, and Bay Ridge Beach.

In 1937, the Rev. Howard O. Walker became assistant pastor, the first of three ministerial sons to return to their home church as pastors. Other assistant pastors working with real dedication during this busy time for Christ Church were the Rev. Rodger M. Singer (1941-1945), the Rev. Howard O. Baily (1945-1950), the Rev. William Rappold (1951-1952), and the Rev. Donald W. Sanner (1953-1955). Between 1938 and 1961, Christ Church was blessed with two deaconesses, Sister Vernetta Kunkel (1938-1945) and Sister Janet Coiner (1945-1961). Mrs. Edna White worked as a parish visitor and office assistant from 1947 until 1960. Also, Mrs. Marie Boylan was a part-time Sunday School visitor and Mrs. Edith Jones an office assistant in the fifties and sixties. All of these individuals served with distinction, giving untiring and devoted service to the congregation.

Eight more young men from the parish entered the Lutheran ministry in this period: Lawrence D. Folkemer and Carl W. Folkemer (1940), W. Leigh Bell and Gordon E. Folkemer (1944), C. Edgar Koehnlein (1949), Donald R. Gallion (1951), L. Crosby Deaton (1953), and Barron B. Maberry (1958). Pastor Crosby Deaton returned to his home congregation as the parish's first associate pastor in 1955.

PART V

CHRIST CHURCH, 1955 -1960

Christ Church's reputation in the city-at-large spread because of the weekly broadcast of the 11:00 a.m. worship service and Dr. Deaton's other frequent appearances on radio and, later, on television. He led the fight in 1953 to eliminate the sale of alcoholic beverages on Sundays near churches after charging that patrons of five taverns in the area of Charles and Hill Streets had disturbed churchgoers and interfered with the services. Dr. Deaton also served as President of the Council of Churches of Maryland, President of the Board of Higher Education of the United Lutheran Church in America, Chairman of the U.L.C.A.'s Committee on Church Architecture, and President of the Board of the Lutheran Inner Mission Society of Baltimore (forerunner of Lutheran Social Services).

Termites precipitated the next great change in the physical facilities of Christ Church. These destructive insects were discovered in the floors of the old church building as early as the days of World War II, when one of the many servicemen housed by the congregation was unpleasantly surprised as his foot went through the lecture room floor! A structural analysis later revealed that the roof was less than 50% of the strength required by the Baltimore City Code and that the entire 100-year old building was being supported by the new parish house and the organ chamber. Even the box in the cornerstone of the building was a sopping-wet mass. It was found that the building could not be made into a sound structure without a complete rebuilding from the foundation up. Even this would not provide a first-floor church large enough to accommodate more than one-fourth of the congregation or the necessary room for an expanded Sunday School program. In addition, the church was hot in the summer; had a low, oppressive ceiling; crumbling and stained plaster; and hard, uncomfortable pews.

Clearly a new building was needed, but the site of the Greater Christ Church was the subject of much debate. Some members of the church

suggested that the congregation move to the suburbs where a large number of members lived. Others felt that Christ Church should merge with another downtown Lutheran congregation. A few shuddered at the thought of building a new church edifice on Hill Street, saying. "It is a waste of money," or "I cannot approve of such a ridiculous move in these days and in this neighborhood."

Dr. Deaton responded by writing,

> *"Let no one say that our location is not good. That has always been our excuse for doing nothing. The unique thing about our church, and that which makes it the 'talk' of our city and the whole church, is that we maintain our strength and give such an effective witness in this location. If we ever leave here, we shall be just another 'run-of-the-mill' church and only about one-third our present strength. God placed us here, prospered us here, and wants us to remain here. We can be a much greater church than we now are if we stop making excuses and put our hands and hearts and pocketbooks to the task that God has given us to do."*

This the people of Christ Church did! In 1955 the congregation conducted a capital funds appeal for the new church with a goal of $250,000 to be contributed over a three-year period. When all the pledges were counted, they totaled $463,615 — almost twice the goal. Groundbreaking took place in October 1955, and, although construction was beset by delays, the dedication service for the new edifice was held on May 18, 1958.

The new limestone-trimmed brick building included a ground floor air-conditioned church seating 1,028, the pastors' sacristy, a working sacristy, a large classroom (now used for the coffee hour), a small kitchen, and a new church parlor. In the basement was an undercroft with complete kitchen and storage and shower facilities, as well as choir practice and robing rooms. Three classrooms, one of which became the church library, and a sound system control room completed the second floor plan.

Beautiful stained-glass windows depicting both Old and New Testament themes were installed. The Great Christus Gloriosus window was placed over the altar in memory of Dr. Zimmerman, and a large rose window was at the north end of the sanctuary. This new church building, completed at a total cost of more than one million dollars, was the only religious building of any kind to be built in Baltimore's

inner city for over 50 years. Less than three years after its dedication, the congregation was again debt-free.

The physical facilities of the church were further enhanced with the erection in 1958 of a 16-bell carillon in a steel tower near the rear entrance. Mr. Frank Hubbard has served faithfully as carillonneur since it was put into operation.

Had Dr. Deaton lived three more months, he would have presided at the burning of the mortgage of the new building. The time and energy expended by Dr. Deaton on the Christ Church building project had taken their toll. In the fall of 1960, he was ordered to the hospital for a complete rest. His last message to the people he served so well was in the form of the annual Thank Offering appeal. He ended the letter with, "God does His best for us. Let us always do our best for Him." On November 8, 1960, this servant of the Lord who truly did his best was called to his eternal rest.

Dr. Deaton was appreciated and recognized as a strong leader and effective pastor many times during the more than 26 years he served Christ Church. He received numerous awards and citations from both civic and religious groups. The words of Christ Church members, however, best reveal what he meant to the congregation:

"Dr. Deaton was such a comfort to me and was always there when I needed him."

"A great leader for so many years. A great architect of the church."

"A strong administrator, an excellent preacher, and a dedicated servant of Christianity."

"A builder who possessed an excellent knowledge of architecture."

"A wonderful, kind, and considerate person."

PART VI

CHRIST CHURCH, 1960-1982

The task of ministering to the needs of the almost 2,000 widely-scattered parishioners fell to the new assistant pastor, the Rev. Rodney A. Gatzke, who, with the help of several lay people and ministerial sons, led the congregation for one year until a new senior pastor was called and who remained on until 1962 as assistant pastor.

In October 1961, Dr. Warren C. Johnson, a native of Schenectady, New York, and a former pastor of Second Lutheran Church in Baltimore and Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the United Lutheran Church in America, began his ministry as pastor. An excellent and popular preacher with a warm Christian personality and a deep spiritual concern for those he served, Dr. Johnson presented to Christ Church the possibilities of wider service in the community and throughout the greater Baltimore area. In this work, he was ably assisted by Pastors J. Brooks Moore (1962-1964) and Russell M. Long (1963-1965). In 1964, the thirteenth ministerial son of the congregation, Mr. Ralph Welsh, graduated from seminary and was ordained.

During Dr. Johnson's tenure, confirmation instruction was extended to three years, the children's choirs were consolidated into junior and intermediate groups, and children's chapel services regularly attracted a large number of young worshipers. Luther League meetings were switched to Friday and Saturday evenings, and annual weekend retreats for teenagers (first at Camp Jolly Acres, then at Mar-Lu-Ridge) continued. Record hops led to the establishment of a weekly teen center on Friday evenings. The Boy Scout program was reorganized, and there were several attempts to reactivate a Girl Scout troop which had not been in operation since the 1930s.

Some changes in Christ Church were caused by the merger of four national Lutheran bodies. The congregation adopted a new constitution in which it dropped the word "English" from its name. This was done

primarily because all but one Lutheran church in Baltimore were by this time English-speaking, no longer making this a distinguishing characteristic of the congregation. The United Lutheran Church Women and the Ladies' Society were merged into one women's organization, the Lutheran Church Women, with several small groups meeting at various times during the day and evening. Another change called for by the new constitution was the stipulation that all money collected must be through freewill offerings. Therefore, commercial events, such as the sour beef and oyster suppers, were discontinued. The new constitution also reduced membership on the Church Council from 36 to 15 members, each serving a term of three years, with church officers elected annually.

Outreach programs which were initiated included a Sunday School class especially designed for young married couples, a bus route throughout neighboring communities to bring people to church, and the restructuring of the District Leaders and Telephone Committee, charged with contacting every member of the parish to encourage greater attendance and participation in church life. The annual congregational Christmas get-together also began during this period.

Dr. Johnson resigned, effective in June of 1964, and Pastor Long served as interim pastor until a new senior minister was called in 1965. The new pastor of Christ Church was Dr. Carl W. Folkemer, the fifth in a long line of ministerial sons of the congregation who have served the parish well in many capacities. As a ministerial son, Dr. Folkemer understood the history, accomplishments, spirit, and needs of the congregation. He accepted its call, realizing, as he said, that underneath was "the help of the everlasting arms," and he was installed on June 6, 1965. Dr. Folkemer had served St. John's Lutheran Church in Linthicum for 23 years, taught church history at the Lutheran Deaconess School, and was on the Board of Directors of Lutheran Social Services of Maryland. As a Reformation scholar, he had translated a portion of Martin Luther's works from Latin into English.

In the late 1960s, the congregation became involved in a wider range of social service programs such as a neighborhood club; a day camp at which music, drama, art, recreation, and dancing were offered to children in grades 1-12; and community carnivals and Halloween parties, all under the direction of Mr. And Mrs. Jules Zabawa. A teen center, organized and run by the young people of the church under adult supervision, drew both neighborhood youth and church members. As a part of a cooperative program with the Saints Stephen and James' congregation, Mr. Matthew Ernst coordinated a

neighborhood social ministries project, helping to lay the foundation for greater opportunities in this area in the years to come.

Meals-On-Wheels also came to Christ Church during Dr. Folkemer's pastorate. This program involves preparing and distributing a hot and cold meal five days a week to shut-ins across the southern area of Baltimore City and northern Anne Arundel County.

Assistant or associate pastors serving with distinction during Dr. Folkemer's tenure were the Rev. W. Phillip Fogarty, Dr. Edward S. Goetz, the Rev. Justus Liesmann, the Rev. Thomas P. Williamsen, and the Rev. Robert H. Mack. In 1972, Mr. Robert N. Maddox, Jr., became another son of the congregation to be ordained into the gospel ministry. Mrs. Rosabelle Timm was assistant church secretary during the 1970s, and after Miss Zumbrun retired as secretary in 1981, the secretarial work was done by Mrs. Gloria Nickles and Mrs. Mary Lou Cavaselis. Currently, Mrs. Nancy Charitonuk, assisted by Mrs. Roberta Yost, serve with great effectiveness as the congregation's secretaries.

The worship life of the congregation was greatly enriched in 1977 by the institution of weekly services of intercessory prayer and spiritual healing every Tuesday morning. The music program was also strengthened under the leadership of Carl Schroeder, Ruth Haefka, and Paul Davis, who served at various times during this period as organists or directors of music. The Christ Church Concert Association was formed in the 1970s to sponsor several outstanding musical events each year, including concerts by the Christ Church Choir and instrumental soloists.

The biggest thrust in the field of social ministry began in 1965 with the formation of the Greater Christ Church Committee to make a thorough study of the pressing physical and spiritual needs in the Baltimore area and to identify ways that the congregation could help meet them. For almost 80 years, Christ Church had brought strength, comfort, and hope to its own community of believers and to others by the radio broadcast. Now, however, through large sums of money and an enormous amount of time and energy, the church was to expand its ministry to help meet the housing and medical needs of people without regard to religion, creed, color, or station in life—a project which was heralded across the country as a unique and outstanding venture by an individual congregation.

After extensive negotiations for funding with city, state, and federal governmental agencies, the Christ Church Complex was proposed. The

plan included a medical center named after the third pastor of the church, Dr. John L. Deaton, and affiliated with University Hospital to provide quality medical and nursing care; an apartment building for low and moderate income elderly people and disabled adults of any age; a beautiful plaza; and an underground garage.

When this tremendous project was placed before the congregation, the members responded by adopting a resolution approving the concept and authorizing that planning of the facility and a capital funds appeal begin. After a feasibility study, a professional fundraising consultant told the Church Council that realistically church members would contribute about $250,000 over a three-year period for the project. "If somehow," the consultant said, "you can really inspire the congregation, they might conceivably give $350,000, but don't count on it." A third figure, $425,000, was added in the way that a negotiator asks for $100,000 in the hope of getting $10,000. When the three years were up, the congregation had pledged $419,000, but actually had given $470,000. At the end of five years, the total contributions reached almost three-quarters of a million dollars, all for a project to serve not only our own constituency but the community-at-large as well.

In his anniversary sermon of 1971, Dr. Folkemer attributed this amazing feat to Gods's love:

> *"The glory and the praise belong first to God. With God, all things are possible. All God needs is a man, a woman, a child, a congregation that is responsive to His grace and power and love. We are the stewards of His grace. All that is needed is that we be found faithful. If all we attempt to do ... conforms to His will and uses His grace, we can never fail."*

In April of 1969, houses on Hill Street across from the church were demolished, the first house to be torn down that of a lifelong member. Within three-and-one-half years, the John L. Deaton Medical Center opened, containing 220 beds and a renal dialysis unit to treat patients with kidney disease. The $6.1 million Christ Church Harbor Apartments opened in 1974 with 288 one bedroom and efficiency apartments, each with a balcony facing the redeveloped Inner Harbor or the Christ Church Plaza. An underground parking garage and a beautifully landscaped plaza and fountain completed the complex. The Deaton Center, the first building to be opened in the Charles Center Harbor I Project, is now a centerpiece of a nationally-known urban redevelopment program. In addition to the seed money raised for planning and the initial land acquisition, members of Christ Church

participated in the project through the furnishing of Deaton Center rooms in honor or in memory of loved ones.

Other highlights of church life during Dr. Folkemer's pastorate included the continuing financial support of Dr. Rodger M. Singer as a missionary to Hong Kong and the yearly firemen's memorial service held to commemorate public servants who had given their lives to protect others. The Sunday School instituted a new married couples' class, reactivated the church library, held communion breakfasts for teenagers, and conducted spirited contests to boost weekly attendance. The Hill Street Players produced several lavish stage presentations in the Fellowship Hall including "The King and I," "Annie Get Your Gun," "South Pacific," and "The Sound of Music." A weekly amateur wrestling instruction program was popular among teenage boys for many years during the 1960s. Christ Church was also the site of the Maryland Synod Conventions in 1960 and 1975, and the church extended its community outreach further through active participation in the South Baltimore Emergency Relief agency and the Coalition of Peninsula Organizations.

In early 1982, Dr. Folkemer submitted his letter of retirement, to become effective May 31. Christ Church's first "homegrown" senior pastor, Dr. Folkemer was proud to point out that he was baptized by the first pastor, Dr. Zimmerman, confirmed by the second pastor, Dr. Blackwelder, and married by the third pastor, Dr. Deaton. In his 17 years as the leader of the congregation, Dr. Folkemer was first and always a pastor to his people. He preached the gospel with energy and forcefulness, leading the church into its dynamic social ministry program to the sick and elderly. Dr. Folkemer was a person of vision and an outstanding pastor of the Lutheran church. After serving as Pastor Emeritus for several years, Dr. Folkemer died on March 16, 1997.

In a letter to the congregation in 1982, Dr. Folkemer said:

> *"Christ Church was largely instrumental in my acceptance of the call to the ministry many years ago. The spiritual warmth, love, and inspiration I received at the 'Church You Can't Forget' during the very formative years of my life and that of my family played a very large part in my decision to enter the ministry .... I am grateful that God has permitted me to close my active pastoral ministry in the very congregation where I was spiritually nourished and in the congregation that has been such a great spiritual influence*

on my whole family."

Associate Pastor Robert H. Mack ably administered the affairs of the congregation for eight months until a new senior pastor was called. On January 24, 1983, the Rev. John R. Sabatelli, a native of New York City, became the sixth pastor of the congregation, promising to continue to "lift high the cross of Christ" as the congregation approached its second century. Christ Church, Baltimore, is the third church bearing the same name served by Pastor Sabatelli (the others being in Wantagh and Islip Terrace, New York). In addition to his pastoral responsibilities prior to coming to Baltimore, he was the director for stewardship for the Metropolitan New York Synod.

PART VII

CHRIST CHURCH, 1983-2001

Under Pastor John R. Sabatelli's dynamic leadership, the congregation built on its existing ministries to the sick and elderly. The worship experience was continually enhanced, outreach initiatives to the community increased dramatically, and opportunities expanded significantly for members and friends to learn and grow spiritually.

Worship

Music inspires, edifies, and delights and has always been central to the worship experience at Christ Church. The quality of the music program, however, was enhanced significantly under the leadership of Dr. Paul Davis, the church staff member with the longest tenure. In recent years, the music menu has become particularly rich and diverse, featuring instrumentalists and ensembles including flutes, piccolos, timpani, clarinets, handbells, and trumpets. Selections from Bach to Dixieland, from spirituals to American folk hymns, richly convey God's Word musically as a part of worship at Christ Church.

Unlike most inner city churches, the adult choir is made up largely of volunteers. Occasionally, youth and handbell choirs round out the opportunities for musical participation. The *With One Voice* hymn supplement was purchased in 1995 to enlarge the repertoire of hymns to be sung, and, a few years later, worship went "hymnal-less" with the complete service printed out each week for the ease of worshipers.

Throughout the 1980s, children were encouraged to attend the 11 am service and, after a special children's sermon, to go to a time of worship and fellowship with their adult advisors. By the 90s, however, most children were remaining in the church for the entire hour so that they could learn about worship and participate with their parents. Children are occasionally involved in the service, and special handbags with

bulletin supplements and activities are distributed to the little Lutherans.

Another important change was the gradual move of the congregation over several years toward implementing the ELCA recommendation to celebrate Holy Communion on a weekly basis. The church also began the practice, likewise endorsed by the national church, in which all baptized children can begin to commune at a time determined cooperatively through ongoing conversation among the pastor, child, and parents and after participation in a first communion class appropriate to the age of the child.

Because Lutherans "love Lent," Wednesday late morning services were added for this holy season to accommodate those who prefer to worship during the day. Lunches or dinners accompanied the services, along with Christian education courses taught by the pastors. In the mid 1990s, the church instituted the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday and incorporated foot washing and stripping of the altar into Maundy Thursday worship.

By the late 1990s, Wednesday evenings throughout the year had evolved into an important time for worship and Christian education for all groups. Each mid-week, families and individuals join together at Christ Church for a simple dinner and then remain for instruction, discussion, and a contemplative service of Holy Communion.

Festival services on Ascension Day are held yearly, in cooperation with St. Mark's and Zion Lutheran churches, with special music and sermons by synod leadership or outstanding parish pastors. Mid-week healing services continue to address the totality of physical, emotional, and spiritual well being of members and friends. Other opportunities for corporate worship were added from time to time over the years, including a Monday evening service and short mid-day worship opportunities on Sunday at the Christ Church Harbor Apartments.

Another worship innovation was a brief, informal service that was held for several summers beginning in 1991 during the Sunday School hour. Each week, a different family or group of individuals assisted as ushers, lectors, and communion assistants. In 1998, this type of informal service was added to the worship schedule every Sunday for the entire year. The contemporary service of Holy Communion features a wide range of music, including "praise" music, country music, and selections from many ethnic traditions; a special message for children and adults from the pastor; and a more informal dress and environment.

Attendance has grown steadily at this service, as many members and friends, especially those with small children, find its pace and structure meeting their needs. A contemporary musical group, directed by Ferd Maisel, leads the service.

To enhance the Sunday worship experience further, greeters welcome worshipers, and laypersons read lessons and participate as communion presenters and assisting ministers. Laypersons were trained as Eucharistic ministers, extending the Sunday celebration of Holy Communion to the sick and shut-ins by taking them the sacrament. Parishioners also enjoy light refreshments and conversation at the coffee hours following Sunday morning services.

In these ways, Christ Church demonstrated a flexibility to address the changing life styles and work schedules of its members and to reach out to those for whom traditional schedules and modes of worship are not convenient or valuable. Attendance at weekly worship has grown from an average of 354 attending worship each week in 1982 to an average of 518 attending weekly in 2001, and this in a city whose population shrinks by about a thousand each month.

Christian Education

Christian education opportunities were enlarged significantly during the 1980s and 90s. Under the leadership of Pastor Sabatelli and Christian education director Liz Rickel, the Sunday School grew steadily and substantially from a handful of students in the early 80s to 155 children in 2001. Weekly at Christ Church, children are actively engaged in learning God's Word in a variety of interactive and interesting formats. There are classes for all ages (two through high school), in which meaningful connections are made between Biblical stories and children's daily lives. In special children's education events on Wednesday nights and holidays such as Good Friday, children explore their emerging Christian faith through lessons, projects, and crafts.

Confirmation instruction is a 2-1/2 year program using an interactive, small-group setting with adult guides working in each group. The study materials incorporate Luther's *Small Catechism* and *The Holy Bible.*

Vacation church school was re-instituted in the mid 1990s, with evening programs in the summer for pre-school children through

adults covering themes such as "Bibletimes" and the "Early Marketplaces."

Adult forums on Sunday morning address topical issues such as human sexuality, stewardship, the right to die, handling personal loss, and job burnout. Many special interest classes have been formed over the years, meeting both on Sundays and throughout the week to address the needs of different segments of the congregation, including, in the 80s, community-based Bible study groups which studied God's Word, shared joys and concerns, and built fellowship in the homes of members.

Many other educational opportunities have been provided over the years. For example, distance-learning courses brought the perspectives of several world-class theologians to Christ Church via teleconferencing. An interactive video series in early 2001, for example, focused on significant turning points in church history. Several sessions of the Christ Church Institute for Theological Education enabled famous scholars to spend a weekend on the Christ Church campus, lecturing on important issues such as the church's missionary efforts at home and around the world.

Activities and Events

There have been ever-increasing opportunities for members and friends to be involved in church-related activities. In the fall of 1983, Kimerly Bond joined the staff to coordinate programs including a singles ministry for people of all ages, a rejuvenated youth group, and a young married couples group. Among the special events in the early 1980s, some of which continued for many years, were movie nights, dances, ski trips, swimming pool parties, hay rides, cook outs, and crab feasts.

Study circles, Christmas caroling parties, dinners, and picnics were also scheduled on a regular basis. Softball games, strawberry festivals, and family fun nights rounded out the busy schedule designed to engage every segment of the diverse congregation in a worthwhile or fun activity.

During the 1980s, the Hill Street Players continued to offer regular dramatic presentations, including "Arsenic and Old Lace," "Pillow Talk," and "Don't Drink the Water." Under drama director Nadine Knoche, Christ's Players continued the tradition into the new century with dramatic readings and productions such as "Godspell" and

"You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown."

The church calendar grew more crowded as classic yearly events, such as the Mother-Daughter and the Father-Son Banquets, were supplemented with new ongoing activities including monthly senior citizens' group meetings, new circles of the Women of the ELCA, and adult fellowship groups. There were occasional adult and family retreats, and full scholarships were given to children and teenagers who attended summer camp at Mar-Lu-Ridge in Western Maryland.

Participation in youth groups grew in the early 90s, under Seminarian Amy Godshall, who returned to Christ Church after graduation to serve as Assistant Pastor and later Associate Pastor. Community service was a focus of youth outreach at the time, including sponsoring a "Parents Afternoon Out," spring cleaning for the elderly at Christ Church Harbor Apartments, and "crop walks" for the hungry.

Several pictorial directories were assembled throughout the period to strengthen bonds among the members. New members' pictures were posted on a bulletin board, and current members were designated as "shepherds" to welcome and introduce newcomers to congregational activities.

Staffing

Over the years, the congregation continually looked at evolving needs and responsibilities in the parish and community and modified staff positions to meet them. When long-time Associate Pastor Robert H. Mack decided to reduce his schedule and become a part-time Visitation Pastor with responsibilities to call on shut-in members and friends, a long-range planning committee examined the number and types of staff members needed. As a result, Pastor Godshall continued to assume responsibility for youth and young adult ministries. Another aspect of the long-range plan was to call a pastor-evangelist, The Rev. Elizabeth Risch, to develop and implement the strategies needed to expand significantly the congregation's membership. The Rev. John Miller, the husband of Pastor Godshall and the most recent member of the congregation to complete seminary, contributed significantly to the church's work in administration, technology, and service as an Associate Pastor in the late 1990s. In 1996, Pastor Mack was named Pastor Emeritus, a designation he called "the greatest retirement gift of all."

In 2000, after Pastors Godshall and Miller left Christ Church to serve

two rural parishes in Talbot County and Pastor Risch resigned to work for an agency in the Lutheran Center, a new leadership team was formed. Currently, The Rev. Duke Fries serves as Associate Pastor with special responsibilities for evangelism and outreach. The Rev. Kristin M. Dubsky is the Assistant Pastor, directing the youth and confirmation ministries. Under Pastor Sabatelli's leadership, all three pastors take significant roles in preaching the Word and administering the sacraments at public worship services, visiting the sick and hospitalized, and expanding the church's outreach and ministry.

Lifelong member Jonathan Hamman is completing seminary and is scheduled in 2001 to join the ranks of the Christ Church's family who have entered the Lutheran ministry. Also, member Gigi Grant is expected to graduate from seminary in 2002 and become the first "daughter" of the congregation to be ordained.

In early 1996, the position of parish nurse was added to the staff. This position, relatively unique in churches, is designed to serve as a health educator, personal health counselor, and liaison with community health resources, while addressing the spiritual dimension in people's lives. Kathryn Carpenter was the first parish nurse, followed by Mary Simmons. Linda Citroni currently holds the position. A health needs and interest assessment, conducted of congregational families in 2001, provided data to guide the work of the Health Cabinet Task Force.

Building Upgrades

Pastor Sabatelli has written:

> *The church's property allows us to minister and witness to the importance of God in our lives and community. When the Inner Harbor was very much run down and not a tourist mecca nor a desirable place to live, Christ Church saw to it that its property was an oasis in a sea of decay and gave powerful witness that it believed in the city's future. We still do.*

The last 20 years, therefore, saw a series of renovations to the church buildings and, in the late 90s, a significant addition to the Christ Church campus.

In 1986, the Deaton Hospital and Medical Center secured a $15,800,000 loan to add 120 beds and increase its capacity to 360

patients. The new wing was named in honor of Dr. Carl Folkemer, Christ Church Pastor when the hospital was conceptualized and built. Although separate, non-profit corporations owned the Deaton Hospital and the apartments for the elderly, the congregation has played a seminal and continuing role in their founding and operation. Church members contributed over $1,000,000 to the hospital and $100,000 to the apartments as "seed money" to get them started over 30 years ago, and many continue to volunteer regularly in the two facilities. In these ways, the congregation is living out its concern for the care of the sickest and frequently the poorest people in our city as well as providing low-cost, attractive housing for persons of all races and creeds in one of the most desirable urban settings in America.

In 1991, the carillon, built almost 20 years before, was enclosed in a belfry, which added significant height and beauty to the building. Around the same time, other lingering property needs were addressed, including a renovation of the organ, the installation of an elevator, new roofs for older parts of the building, painting, and the restoration of the church's stained glass windows. Landscaping was added, and new sidewalks and handicapped ramps installed. The sound system was upgraded in 1995 to include a FM system enabling hearing-impaired worshipers to hear the service on their personal headsets.

In the changing world of health care in the late 20th century, operating a small independent specialty hospital became more and more difficult. After several larger health-care providers in the metropolitan Baltimore area expressed interest in purchasing the John L. Deaton Hospital, the facility was sold in June of 1996 to the University of Maryland Medical System. Providing both chronic care and skilled nursing care for people with a variety of injuries and illnesses, this move was part of a major consolidation of area hospitals and helped the University of Maryland Medical System fill an essential component of their integrated delivery program. As a result of the sale of Deaton, the church, through the Christ Church Foundation, received approximately $10,800,000.

About $2,000,000 of this funding enabled the church to build handicapped-accessible rest rooms on the main level, upgrade the offices, repair the heating system, re-wire and air condition the entire 1936 building, renovate the parlor, and paint and re-carpet Sunday School rooms.

Another $1,000,000 of this funding was used to establish the Christ Connection, a program for community-based theological education

being conducted by the Philadelphia and Gettysburg Seminaries. Using computer networks and cutting-edge video technology, the seminaries are now able to provide educational programs through interactive telecommunication. As a result, courses being taught on one campus can be made available to other campuses as well as to "learning center churches," such as Christ Church, where the distance learning technology was installed. Through this program, many thousands of persons will be able to grow in their understanding of the faith, as it is hoped that other learning centers will be established up and down the East Coast.

The biggest change in the church campus in almost 30 years, however, occurred in October 1999, with the opening of the six-story Lutheran Center on a compact site immediately south of the Christ Church Harbor Apartments. The 47,000-square foot, $6,700,000 building houses four organizations: Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA, and the Maryland Regional Office of Diakon Lutheran Services. The building is set back as far as possible from nearby row houses and is separated from the church by the Good Samaritan Quilt Plaza, a promenade paved in a tri-color quilting pattern. The Global Village Market, on the first floor, sells hand-made products from around the world, produced by people paid a living wage. While the Deaton Hospital was the first Inner Harbor development project, the Lutheran Center is the final building to be constructed on the "front row" of the Inner Harbor. An architectural review in the *Baltimore Sun* concluded, "At a time when more and more organizations want to make their home on Baltimore's waterfront, this inspired [building]... shows how to do it right."

Outreach Programs

Recognizing that buildings are not ends in themselves, but means to ministry, Pastor Sabatelli led Christ Church to make a major commitment in the 1980s and 90s to a personal, hands-on outreach ministry that has made a significant positive difference in the lives of many.

The early 1980s saw the establishment of a summer day camp for five weeks as an outreach to the rapidly developing neighborhood. Friendly visitor programs were started in which trained volunteers visited with people unable to worship, thereby forming a "living link" between the part of the church family that gathered each Sunday morning and those unable to attend. There was continuing support of South Baltimore

Emergency Relief (SOBER) and Meals on Wheels, as well as the first opportunity to assist refugees from Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia move to and settle in Baltimore. Regular trips were held to the National Lutheran Home to stay in contact with the increasing number of Christ Church members who were residents there.

In the 1980s, longtime member Kathy Eltermann became the church's first evangelism director and started a variety of programs to increase participation and outreach. As a part of the "Sharing Your Faith" initiative, for example, prayer partners in the congregation were recruited to lift up to God the daily the concerns of over 900 people.

A major and continuing thrust involved helping to feed and house homeless people in the South Baltimore area. In 1987, the church began financial support for a homeless shelter in St. Mark's Lutheran Church. At the same time, Christ Church started its first soup kitchen in the undercroft, serving meals initially only on weekends. The need for the soup kitchen grew, and, by 1989, the kitchen was serving as many as 220 meals on Sundays when few other similar facilities were open.

In the winter of 1988, in cooperation with Baltimore City, the church first opened a temporary shelter for the homeless in the lower hall. The city provided a manager and the government-subsidized food, and the church donated the space, equipment, supplies, power, and utilities as well as volunteers to cook and serve meals. The shelter was re-opened for several winters, evolving, by the mid 90s, into a place of safe respite for 40 women and children each night.

In 1997, the church took the step of adding a full-time director of social ministry to the staff. Working with dedicated volunteers, Lindy Utermohle coordinated efforts and introduced the church to multiple outreach opportunities such as multi-year participation in ELCA global mission events as well as summer work camps to rebuild destroyed homes and churches in Minnesota, North Dakota, and West Virginia. Under her leadership, there were frequent blood donor drives; regular food collections for the needy; and increased involvement at the shelter, that by now had become a 24-hour-a-day operation providing many services to residents such as advocacy, substance abuse counseling, and tutoring. These and other initiatives have continued and expanded under Karen Adkins, the current social ministry director.

Another hands-on project, in cooperation with Towson Presbyterian Church, involved many Christ Church members in refurbishing a two-

story row house on Light Street into a home for a low-income family. The house was named "Elizabeth House" for Christ Church member Elizabeth Lottich who had served for many years as the church's volunteer social ministry chairperson and is a tireless advocate for the needy in the community. Teams of church members work with formerly homeless families living in Elizabeth House around job, budgeting, schooling, health and other issues. This is an example of a full-circle ministry, that begins in the shelter, often includes other agencies, continues in Elizabeth House, and hopefully ends with home ownership.

In the late 1990s, Pastor Sabatelli became the pastoral intern supervisor for Salem Lutheran Church in South Baltimore, helping that struggling congregation re-establish itself so that it could, once again, call a full-time pastor. At the same time, additional refugee families were re-settled from Bosnia, and a Lutheran pastor in Vladivostok, Russia, received Christ Church support as a mission partner.

Closer to home, a special relationship was established between Christ Church and Thomas Johnson Elementary School in South Baltimore. In summer 1998, an enrichment nature camp was held at the school, opening the door to establishing tutoring and incentive programs the following year focusing on students who were reading below grade level. As a part of the program, Christ Church funded reading tutors and congregation members volunteered to work with students daily to improve their reading achievement. In the annual standardized tests administered by the Baltimore City Public Schools, the percentage of Thomas Johnson students reading on grade level increased significantly in the year of the Christ Church-sponsored reading initiative. The church is now sponsoring after-school reading programs at neighboring Federal Hill Elementary School as well as continuing its commitment to Thomas Johnson Elementary.

A church Internet web site (www.christinnerharbor.org) was set up in 1996. The site was recognized by the ELCA as the best in the synod and an outstanding link to the wider community via new technologies.

PART VIII

CONCLUSION

Over the past 20 years, under Pastor Sabatelli's clear and focused leadership, a new spirit of enthusiasm has been generated among the members of Christ Church. There is a vibrant joy of serving in a congregation with such a rich history. The congregation feels the excitement of being in the center of one of the most beautiful harbor development projects in the country and an anticipation of the future work that needs to be done and can be done by dedicated individuals.

In a 1997 update to the congregation, Pastor Sabatelli wrote:

> *Part of the magic and greatness of Christ Church is its amazing ability to hold onto its rich and glorious traditions and history at the same time it is open to change and the future.*
>
> *This wonderfully creative and talented mix – firmly rooted in the past, optimistically open to the future, and always grounded in the cross – is vitally important. Christ Church has been a leader, whether as the first church in Baltimore to have a telephone, or in the re-building of the Inner Harbor. When others ran from the city, we stayed. When others closed their doors, we made a home for Meals on Wheels and opened homeless shelters and soup kitchens.*
> *In all these things, to God alone belongs the glory. Let us in faith continue on that path: reverence for the past, optimism for the future, and respect for all our members – a creative blend of old and young alike.*

Although this history has mentioned many church staff members over the years, the real history of Christ Church is not the story of distinguished staff, as important as their work has been. The real history of this congregation is the story of the work in Christ's name done by the lay members of the parish.

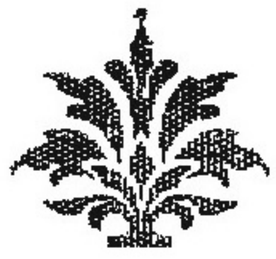
The church is people, and it has been the people of Christ Church who have carried on its witness so effectively. To name some workers and not name all, whether the contribution was large or small, would have been to leave out a dedicated servant of God. Those who are familiar with this great history can insert the names of dedicated lay leaders who have had a part in each glorious decade. Indeed, all the members and friends of Christ Church can emblazon their own names somewhere in these pages.

For YOU are the one who:

- Worships regularly
- Supports the church financially so it can minister at home and abroad
- Volunteers to help in one of the many ministries aiding others in need
- Serves on boards or committees
- Attends programs, classes, and activities on a regular basis
- Enjoys the fellowship of Christian brothers and sisters through the many social activities.

YOU are Christ Church!

What is Christ Church's future? It is up to YOU! If we continue to reach out into the community and minister to the sick, hungry, and homeless; if we continue to spread the message of the Gospel; if we continue to tell the Christ Church story to friends and neighbors, the congregation will grow and flourish.

Christ Church is a special fellowship of caring, Christian people, a place where hundreds respond to God's Love by giving their time, talents, and treasures on a regular basis. Christ Church has been "blessed to be a blessing." As the church moves well into its second century of service, the congregation rededicates itself to be a good and faithful steward of the gifts that have been entrusted to it and to go from "strength to strength" in the Lord's service.

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